

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07952876 0

RECOLLECTIONS OF SERVICE  
AND EXPERIENCES IN  
THE SPANISH-AMERICAN  
WAR :: FRANK J. HECKER

*Leucosticte virenticeps*

AT

1000  
C 1000

Mr. George B. Harris  
With the compliments of  
Daniel Hecker

ILG  
Hecker

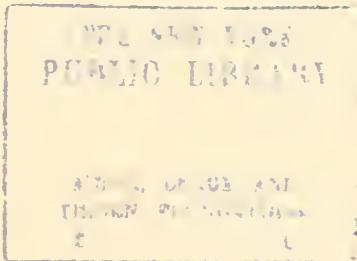






ONE HUNDRED COPIES PRINTED AT  
THE DEVINNE PRESS, NEW YORK, IN  
JUNE, 1913. THIS COPY IS No. ....







Frank Fletcher 1898

RECOLLECTIONS OF  
MY SERVICE AND EXPERIENCES  
IN THE  
SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

1898-1899

BY

FRANK J. HECKER

Late Colonel and Quartermaster United States Volunteers  
Chief of Division of Transportation

cc

DETROIT  
PRIVATELY PRINTED  
1913

ENR

4

THE NEW YORK  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

**288656B**

ASTOR, LENOX AND  
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R 1944 L

FOR  
MY GRANDCHILDREN



## INTRODUCTION

CUBA had been restless ever since the severance of Mexico and Central and South America from Spain, caused largely by the pernicious laws, corrupt misgovernment, and exploitation of the colony for the benefit of the mother country.

As early as 1850 there was acute discontent in the island, and, because of its proximity to the United States, not only our people but the Administration as well voiced their sympathy freely and frequently. The ten years' war, 1868-78, had moral as well as financial support from our citizens; and during the latter portion of the period intervention by our Government seemed probable. Spain, however, by the promise of the abolition of slavery, reforms in government, and colonial autonomy—in addition to general amnesty for those engaged—brought the war to a close.

The promise of governmental reforms and real autonomy proved illusive. Reciprocity with the United States, which had been promised, was not put in force until 1891, and was terminated in 1894. The arrangement had been of great benefit to Cuba, and its termination caused discontent and unrest. Soon preparations for another war began.

In 1895 this disaffection resulted in a general

## INTRODUCTION

insurrection. Those who led the Cubans during the ten years' war again took the field, and numerous filibustering expeditions from the United States aided them. In the winter of 1897-8 the Spanish Captain-General Weyler issued the cruel reconcentrado order, arousing thereby the indignation of our citizens to an extent that created a general sentiment in favor of war with Spain to free Cuba.

The destruction of the battle-ship *Maine*, with a loss of 266 lives, by an explosion in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898, intensified this feeling to such a degree that, notwithstanding President McKinley's strenuous efforts to bring about the freedom of Cuba, or at least its complete autonomy, by diplomatic negotiations, he was forced, by the vote of a fifty-million-dollar national defense fund, to prepare for war.

On April 20 the President approved a resolution, passed by Congress, demanding the immediate withdrawal of Spain from Cuba, but before the American Minister at Madrid could deliver this resolution the Spanish Government sent him his passports. Following this, Congress declared that war had existed since April 21.

This country was unprepared for war. On April 1, 1898, our regular army consisted of 2143 officers and 26,040 enlisted men. On April 23 the President called for 125,000 volunteers; and this number subsequently was increased to 275,000, including the regulars. As expeditiously as possible the regular

## INTRODUCTION

army was mobilized and camps were formed for organizing the newly enlisted volunteers. An expeditionary force of approximately 25,000 men was assembled in the vicinity of Port Tampa, under command of Major-General William R. Shafter; and on May 31 he was ordered to sail for Santiago, under convoy of the navy. Owing to congestion and confusion in embarking, and to the erroneous report that two Spanish armored cruisers (which subsequently proved to have been United States naval vessels) had been sighted in the Nicholas Channel, Cuba, General Shafter did not sail until June 14. He arrived off Daiquiri, an open roadstead about twenty miles east of Santiago, and on June 22 began to disembark.

Immediately on landing, our army encountered a small Spanish force and hostilities began. After almost continuous fighting, including the battles of El Caney and San Juan, the advance of the American Army reached the line of fortifications of Santiago on July 3. General Shafter sent a demand for immediate surrender and began the siege of that city. The time between July 4 and 17, the date of formal surrender, was consumed (except for some desultory skirmishing on the 10th and 11th) in negotiations for the capitulation. Aside from some unimportant skirmishes in Porto Rico early in August, the surrender of Santiago terminated the Spanish-American War. The peace protocol was signed on August 12, 1898.



RECOLLECTIONS OF  
MY SERVICE AND EXPERIENCES  
IN THE  
SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

ON Saturday afternoon, June 18, 1898, I received from Washington the following telegram:

Col. F. J. Hecker,  
Detroit, Mich.:

Can you come here at once? Important.

R. A. ALGER,  
Sec'y of War.

To which reply was sent that I would reach Washington the following evening. As we were jointly interested in a Canadian wood-pulp proposition, I assumed that Secretary Alger desired to see me about that matter.

Major George H. Hopkins<sup>1</sup> met me at the station in Washington and said we were to go direct to the Secretary's residence for dinner. To this I de-

<sup>1</sup> Major Hopkins of Detroit was the military aide of the Secretary of War.

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

murred, because I had no evening clothes with me,—only a club bag. However, we went there. The Secretary took me to his study and informed me that President McKinley and he desired me to enter the service and to take charge of the Division of Transportation with the rank of colonel. I replied to the Secretary that it was out of the question for me to do so; that no one knew better than he the conditions under which the Michigan-Peninsular Car Company, of which I was president, had labored to hold its organization together from 1893 to 1897; that in October, 1892, the company had about 4500 men in its employ, and in October, 1893, only about 450; that the depression in the freight-car-building industry had continued for more than three years; but that, beginning with 1897, a marked demand for new cars developed and continued throughout that year, enabling us gradually to increase our working force, so that we then were operating with an effective force of about 4000 men. He urged me to reconsider, saying the service and he needed me, and that the President was very desirous of appointing me. At all events, he wanted me to remain a week and examine into and pass on some troublesome matters relating to ocean transports, particulars of which Major Charles Bird, of the Quartermaster's Department, would bring with him that evening. This I consented to do, provided I could have the advice of Frank E. Kirby, whom I deemed the ablest marine engineer and constructor, outside of

## RECOLLECTIONS

the Navy, in the country, and whom I knew to be absolutely trustworthy.

The Secretary further said the Quartermaster's Department had more than fifty steamships under charter, then transporting General Shafter's army corps to Cuba; that there was much criticism because of the unfitness of many of these ships, owing to improper ventilation and deficient sanitary arrangements; and that there had been incorrect representations as to their carrying capacity, which was averaging less than half what was claimed. He added that the Navy Department had purchased all the best coastwise ships before the matter of securing Army transports had been taken up; that Congress had authorized the purchase of foreign ships for the Army; and that the President had transferred \$10,-000,000 of the \$50,000,000 war fund to the War Department for that purpose.

When Major Bird arrived, after introducing us the Secretary said he desired us first to take up the matter of the offer of the North German Lloyd steamer *Fürst Bismarck*, and wished me to decide the following day, if possible, whether it would be wise for the Department to buy her. As there was not time to bring Mr. Kirby to Washington, I would have to reach a decision on the papers submitted without his advice, but he would wire him the first thing in the morning, tendering him the position of Consulting Engineer and would urge him to accept it. He then conducted us to his study and said if I

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

was not too tired after examining the papers connected with the offer of the *Fürst Bismarck*, he hoped I would examine the offers of the Beaver Line fleet and of such other ships as we had time and inclination to consider.

Next morning, during our walk to the War Department, the Secretary said the prize-ship *Panama*, captured by the Navy, would be sold at marshal's sale the following day; that the President had requested him to have her bought for the Army, and he wished me to go to New York that night and buy her, getting from Major Bird, during the day, the report of the quartermaster who had inspected her. On reaching the Secretary's office, a desk in one of the rooms and a stenographer were furnished to me, and I spent most of the day examining offers of ships. The Secretary having wired Mr. Kirby and received a favorable reply, I made an appointment with the latter to meet me in Montreal on Wednesday, June 22, to look into the offer of the Beaver Line fleet. During the day I reported unfavorably on the offer of the *Fürst Bismarck*; first, because her deep draft prevented her from entering any Atlantic port south of Newport News, or any port in Cuba other than Havana; and, second, because I deemed the price asked, \$1,750,000, excessive.

## A CALL AT THE WHITE HOUSE

AFTER dinner that evening, the Secretary suggested we call on the President, who received me most pleasantly and said he hoped I had consented to accept the appointment he intended to tender me. I thanked him for the honor done me, but regretted I could not see my way to accept it, and repeated substantially what I had said to the Secretary. He urged me to give the matter further consideration, and was good enough to say my services were really needed and were desired by himself and the Secretary. He thanked me for having taken up the work during the week, and hoped I would reconsider my decision not to enter the service.

On returning to the Secretary's residence, I suggested the necessity of having some credentials to show my authority to buy the *Panama* the next day and to negotiate for the purchase of the Beaver Line fleet the day following. He then wrote the following letter:

War Department,

Washington, June 20, 1898.

Colonel F. J. Hecker.

My dear Sir:

In accordance with our conversation to-day concerning the purchase or charter of ships for the Government in

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

connection with the transportation of troops, supplies, etc., you are hereby authorized to purchase or charter such ships as in your judgment may be needed for such purpose, at such prices as you may decide to pay, reporting to me at the earliest possible hour what ships you have purchased or chartered, when they will be delivered, and where, etc.

You have full authority to hire officers and crews for same, and also fuel, supplies, and all material necessary to fit them out for use.

The Quartermaster-General will pay your drafts for same. Blanks and vouchers will be furnished upon your ordering the same from the Quartermaster's Department.

Yours truly,

R. A. ALGER,  
Secretary of War.

I took the midnight train for New York, met by appointment Captain Summerhayes, the quartermaster who had reported on the prize-ship *Panama*, at the Army Building, and we discussed the best way of making bids at the sale, the Secretary having requested me to avoid as much as possible giving publicity to the matter. I inquired if he knew any one connected with the West Indian trade whom we could trust to represent us. The *Panama* was a fast ship, originally built to run in connection with the Honduras Lottery, and subsequently was engaged in the banana trade. Captain Summerhayes named a firm he believed could be trusted; we called on them and arranged for a fee of \$200 to bid at the

## A CALL AT THE WHITE HOUSE

sale. As to limit of bid, their opinion was that while the ship was well worth \$75,000, under the existing war conditions \$40,000 would be a fair bid, and we agreed to a limit of \$50,000. They then said a \$10,000 deposit had to be made with the marshal, and they had not that sum in bank. Having an account at the National Park Bank, I obtained a certified check from that bank. The ship was bought for \$41,000, and later in the day I had a call at my hotel from a man who, under the impression that the purchase was made by a speculator, offered me first \$45,000, then \$50,000, before I could convince him that she was not for sale at any price.

Later, on the recommendation of Major-General Miles, the Secretary approved the organizing of a wrecking and relief outfit and crew in connection with the *Panama*. First having her thoroughly overhauled and put in the best possible condition, we bought two large sea-going barges with power derricks, a small tug to tow them in shallow harbors (which was loaded on one of the barges), two sea-going tugs, a pile-driver, fifty tons of "T" rails, frogs, switches, ties, bridge-timbers, piles, plank, lumber, blacksmiths' forges, bar iron, chain, wire cables, blocks and tackle, hydraulic jacks, and a general wrecking and construction outfit, to the extent of the safe carrying capacity of the ship and barges. With about one hundred mechanics and track laborers aboard the *Panama*, all under charge of a competent superintendent, D. Van Aken, an

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

experienced dock and railroad builder, the expedition sailed from New York, July 18, for Santiago. The second day out, one of the large tugs, the *Britannia*, broke down and the outfit put into Newport News. We had in the Department the report of the trial trip of the most powerful sea-tug then afloat, the *Gypsum King*, the building of which had just been completed. I got in communication with the owners by long distance 'phone on July 23, bought her for \$150,000, which was \$25,000 in excess of her contract price, ordered her to Newport News, and the expedition sailed from there July 28.

The Spanish troops at Santiago having in the meantime surrendered to General Shafter, the expedition was ordered to follow General Miles's expedition to the south coast of Porto Rico. It arrived off Ponce in time to assist in the disembarking of a portion of General Miles's command, and subsequently successfully released a naval vessel and two army transports from coral reefs on which they had run. After peace was declared, the *Panama* was fitted out as a cable-ship, sent to the Philippines, and was in service there until about 1907, when, while laying a cable between two islands, she ran on a rocky reef and foundered.

Meanwhile, on the evening of June 21, I left New York for Montreal, where Mr. Kirby met me. We found the Beaver Line bankrupt and in the hands of a bankers' committee. The ship which, we were told, would be there for our inspection, had sailed

## A CALL AT THE WHITE HOUSE

the morning previous to our arrival; and a brief conference with the committee convinced me that, because of England's neutrality declaration, it would not be possible to close negotiations and receive the ships in New York within a reasonable time.

## PURCHASES OF TRANSPORTS

I LEFT Montreal that evening and reached Washington the 23d, where I found an offer from Mr. Bernard Baker, the President, of the entire Atlantic Transport fleet—seven ships—for \$4,-800,000. These ships were all built in the Harland & Wolff yard, Belfast. Five were twin screws, with double bottoms, of 6000 tons capacity, and all had extensive refrigerating equipment. They were engaged in the cattle and beef trade, and had unusual continuous and unobstructed deck space. After some negotiation, I purchased the fleet on the 24th for \$4,000,000.

On the same day I purchased the refrigerating ship *Port Victor* for \$175,000, the Holland-American ship *Obdam* for \$250,000, and the Hamburg-American ship *Scandia* for \$200,000, delivered in San Francisco. The latter vessel had just arrived in Port Arthur, China, after having taken to that port one thousand Russian troops. She had been inspected by our Naval attaché, on whose report I made the purchase subject to inspection of hull and machinery on arrival in San Francisco. The Allan Line steamer *Roumanian* was purchased on July 7

## PURCHASES OF TRANSPORTS

for \$240,000, the American Line ship *City of Berlin* on July 8 for \$400,000, and the *City of Chester* on the 25th for \$200,000. The ship *Arizona*, then at Seattle, was purchased on the report of our Quarter-master stationed there, on July 16, for \$600,000.

As rapidly as the purchased ships were delivered to the Department, ventilating systems, hammocks or bunks, adequate galley and necessary sanitary equipments were installed, and the ships were placed in commission in their new service, carrying troops, horses and mules, and general military supplies and equipment from New York, Newport News, Charleston, Savannah, Tampa, and New Orleans to Cuba and Porto Rico; and, on the Pacific, from San Francisco and Seattle to Manila.

As the chartered ships returned to New York or Montauk Point, their charters were cancelled and settlement was made for the damages they had sustained other than natural wear and tear. In a few instances, where irreconcilable differences arose, boards of survey were appointed to determine and fix the damages.

As the purchased ships returned and were discharged, they were sent to Atlantic coast ship-yards and rebuilt, on designs made by Mr. Kirby, as permanent army transports. The twin-screw, double-bottom ships were renamed *Grant*, *Sherman*, *Sheridan*, *Logan*, and *Thomas*; each was fitted out as a troop-ship, with galleys, laundry, bunks, bathing, sanitary and exercise facilities, and armory, for 1800

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

troops and their officers. All of these five transports are now in commission, so far as I know, and are the best fitted out transports any army has, credit for which is due to the great ability and untiring energy of Mr. Kirby.<sup>1</sup>

In this connection I desire to make mention of Mr. Kirby's singular modesty. He did not desire a commission, although he could have had an appointment as major. Nor would he say what salary he desired or expected. Whenever I referred to the subject, he said, "Whatever the Government chooses to pay me will be satisfactory." From June 21 to the latter part of August all he received was reimbursement for actual expenses. About the first of September I said to the Quartermaster-General that something ought to be done about Mr. Kirby's compensation. He took the matter up with the Secretary, who authorized him to instruct me to fix it, and I did so, in writing, naming \$1000 per month. When I handed the communication to the Quartermaster-General, he exclaimed in great astonishment, "Preposterous! That is more than the Major-General commanding the army receives. The Secretary will never authorize it, and I cannot approve it."

"Mr. Kirby's professional income," I replied, "had probably exceeded \$2000 per month."

<sup>1</sup> Frank E. Kirby was then the engineer of the Detroit Dry Dock Company. He has designed the largest passenger steamers on the Great Lakes as well as very many of the largest freighters on inland waters. He is now a consulting naval engineer in New York City.

## PURCHASES OF TRANSPORTS

I am pleased to say that the Secretary did authorize the amount fixed by me, and the Quartermaster-General did approve and pay vouchers for it.

Among the many offers of ships, I will cite two typical cases, showing the greed of the broker lobbyists, of whom there were numerous representatives in evidence. About June 22, specifications of two ships, the *Tartar* and *Athenia*, owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway, were submitted to us by a lobbyist from the State of Washington, the price asked being \$1,150,000 for the two. Lloyd's Register gives correct information of the condition of all ships, and, when extensive repairs are made, states the cost of such repairs. From that source we learned that £44,500, or \$222,500, had been spent in repairs on the two ships at the time the Canadian Pacific Railway purchased them for £115,000, or \$575,000, about a year previously; making the total cost of the two ships \$800,000. They were purchased for the Klondike trade, but when they reached Vancouver it was found there was an excess of Klondike tonnage and the railroad decided to sell them. We considered the price excessive and declined to entertain it. In a day or two they reduced the price to \$1,100,000; this price also we declined. Then a stockbroker from Toronto whom I knew came to Washington and offered the two ships for \$1,000,000, and, on being told that the price was still too high, asked me to make an offer. I offered him \$800,000; he wired to Montreal, receiving reply

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

that \$900,000 was the least they would accept. I again declined.

In the meantime I purchased the *Arizona*, which, together with two chartered Pacific Mail ships, was supposed to be all the transports required on the Pacific. This was before the Aguinaldo insurrection. The latter part of July the Canadian Pacific sent their New York agent, Mr. Skinner, to Washington, with an offer of \$800,000. I informed him of the purchase of the *Arizona*, and stated that in view of the termination of the war, the Department believed it had all the Pacific transports required; but if they would sell the *Tartar*, the better of the two ships, for \$400,000, delivered in San Francisco, we would take her. He said if we would take the ship at Vancouver, he felt authorized to sell at that price. I offered to pay the cost of bringing the ship to San Francisco, and the expense of returning to Vancouver such of the crew as would not accept service with us, but said that we could not consent to take over the ship at Vancouver, as we had no crew. Their view was that under the British neutrality declaration they could not deliver the ship to us at any United States port. So nothing came of the negotiation. Nine years afterward, I met in Montreal Sir Thomas Shaughnessy, then President of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the matter of their failure to sell the two ships came up. I asked him why, knowing each other well, as we did, he had not made direct offer of the ships. He said the lobbyist

## PURCHASES OF TRANSPORTS

told him there was "easy money" in Washington, and the railroad thought they might as well have some of it.

In the other case I had a narrow escape from being placed in what might have been an embarrassing situation. A young man of attractive personality came to me with Vice-President Hobart's card and a note of introduction from Senator Burrows. He offered to sell the ship *Belgian King*, which had been inspected in New York, for \$350,000. I turned the papers over to Mr. Kirby for report. He examined the ship while I was in New York, and on consultation we decided to offer \$190,000 for her; and this I expected to do the next day. On reaching Washington next morning I found in my mail-basket a letter from Mr. Collis P. Huntington to the Secretary, urging the release of the steamship *China* at the earliest day possible. In a brief postscript Mr. Huntington said his friends Swan & Hunter, of New Castle, had the ship *Belgian King* in New York and would sell her for £24,000, or \$120,000. The young man had an exceedingly uncomfortable minute that day and did not sell the ship.

## COMMISSIONED A COLONEL OF VOLUNTEERS

ON the 24th of June, having purchased eleven ships during the week, the Secretary again urged me to enter the service. While I was finding the work most interesting, I had grave doubts of the possibility of any civilian entering the Department as a chief of division without encountering the conscious or unconscious opposition and ill-will of officers in the Department who had served thirty or more years, to such an extent as to make it impossible for him to succeed. On expressing these doubts to the Secretary, he said I was mistaken; that the Quartermaster-General and Major Bird, whom I would supersede, both were most desirous to have me enter the Department. He called these two officers to his office and repeated to them what I had said. They disclaimed any feeling of jealousy or ill-will, and expressed in warmest terms their desire that I enter the service, pledging me their loyal co-operation. After the assurances they gave me, which I believed were sincere, I said I would wire my associates for a meeting in Detroit the following afternoon, and after a conference with them would decide the matter.

That evening the Secretary said he had informed

## COMMISSIONED A COLONEL

the President he believed I would accept the appointment tendered me, whereupon the President had requested him to inform me that he would appoint me a brigadier-general. This was a great and flattering surprise, but seemed to me unwise, as it would tend to arouse such resentment on the part of every one connected with the Department, from the Quartermaster-General to the messengers, as to make my official life impossible. I so said to the Secretary. I further said that since the Civil War there had been only one brigadier-general in the Department—the Quartermaster-General; that the several assistant quartermasters-general were colonels grown gray in the service, all of whom I would outrank; that I thanked the President and was grateful for his consideration, but I could not accept it; and that if I entered the service, it should be, as discussed in his office that afternoon, with the rank of colonel.

The result of the conference with my associates in the Michigan-Peninsular Car Company was that they urged me to accept the President's appointment and enter the service, and this I decided to do, wiring the Secretary to that effect on the afternoon of June 25. I returned to Washington on the 28th.

A bill increasing the personnel of the Quartermaster's Department, and providing, among other appointments, for two additional colonels, was introduced in the Congress, passed the House and Senate, and was approved by the President on July

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

7. On the 8th the President nominated me for the first vacancy, the Senate confirmed the nomination, and my commission was signed that day. On calling on the President that evening to thank him, he was good enough to say, "You should have had a star had you not asked for the eagle."

For reasons unknown to me, the order creating "a Division of Transportation" was not issued by the Secretary of War until July 18, and, as will appear later on, was not promulgated to the Army until August 18, although an official copy of the order was given to me on the date of issue.

## THE RETURN OF THE SPANISH PRISONERS

THE terms of the protocol under which General Toral surrendered Santiago and the Spanish forces in the Division of Santiago de Cuba to Major-General Shafter on July 16 provided that the United States should transport the Spanish troops to Spain. On July 17 the Secretary instructed me to arrange for the necessary transportation as expeditiously as possible, the estimated number being one thousand commissioned officers and twenty-five thousand enlisted men.

Advertisements were telegraphed to newspapers in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New Orleans, inviting sealed proposals to transport and subsist that number to Cadiz or such other port in Spain as might be designated. When the proposals were opened at the United States Army Building, New York, on July 20, I found one was from nine Atlantic steamship lines combined; another was from the Spanish Transatlantic Line; a third was from a junk-dealer in Philadelphia; a fourth from a New York ship-broker who offered a single ship; the fifth was written on a drug-house letterhead, and the sixth on a paper-manufacturer's letterhead. The latter four were not considered.

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

The proposal of the combined Atlantic steamship lines was \$110 for each officer and \$55 for each enlisted man; this meant approximately \$1,400,000, with exorbitant demurrage conditions, the cost of which could not be estimated. The proposal from the Spanish Transatlantic Line was \$55 for each officer and \$20 for each enlisted man, approximately \$535,000, with no demurrage clause. This proposal included, in addition to subsistence, medical attendance and medicines, which latter item the Attorney-General advised us would have to be furnished by the United States under the terms of the protocol. The proposal from the combined lines was so high, and the demurrage clauses so onerous, that I did not feel justified in accepting it. Mr. J. M. Ceballos, the agent of the Spanish Line, informed me quite frankly that the Spanish Government was largely interested in the line, and that it was on cable instructions from the Spanish prime minister that the proposal was made. Under these peculiar conditions, I did not feel authorized to accept his bid. Therefore I wired the Secretary that the conditions of the proposals were such that I would not decide the matter without further instructions. I asked for an appointment on my arrival in Washington that evening, and invited Mr. Ceballos to accompany me. In the train I learned from him that enough of their ships were blockaded in Central and South American ports to transport all the Spanish prisoners, and that the underlying motive in making their proposal was to get these vessels

## RETURN OF THE SPANISH PRISONERS

released and returned to Spain. At this time peace had not yet been declared.

The Secretary, on being informed of the conditions of the two proposals, said that the matter was one for the President to decide. Thereupon he went to the White House and returned shortly, accompanied by Attorney-General Griggs. After a brief conference, it was decided to accept Mr. Ceballos's proposal. Secretary Day<sup>1</sup> was called by telephone and the matter of getting safe-conducts to the blockaded ships was discussed. He invited me to come to his residence. It was decided that the State Department should cable safe-conducts to ministers or consuls at ports where Spanish ships were blockaded. I returned to the office of the Secretary of War, where the Attorney-General had prepared a contract with the Spanish Transatlantic Line. This was signed and executed by the Secretary and Mr. Ceballos about one o'clock in the morning of July 21st.

By the terms of the contract, ratified that day by a cable from the Spanish prime minister, the obligation of the United States under the protocol was to be satisfied when the Spanish prisoners were checked aboard ships alongside the dock at Santiago. The actual number was somewhat less than estimated. The voucher I approved was for \$513,860.

There was much sickness among the prisoners and

<sup>1</sup> William R. Day, then Secretary of State; afterwards chairman of the Spanish-War peace commission; now a justice of the Supreme Court.

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

a considerable number died at sea—how many, we have no means of knowing. Nor will we ever know how much criticism, anxiety, worry, and dissatisfaction we escaped, nor how much over one million dollars was saved; and yet the yellow press was full of abuse of Secretary Alger for having given the Spanish Government dollars instead of bullets. Also the nine Atlantic steamship lines made the contract a subject of complaint before the commission appointed to investigate the conduct of the war with Spain. Subsequently I was called on by this commission to explain why the contract was made with the Spanish line.

It was the practice in the Department, when troops were ordered from one camp or post to another, for the local quartermaster to obtain from the various railroads rates for their transportation, reporting the same to the Quartermaster-General with recommendation; and unless there were good reasons for disapproval, the quartermaster was instructed to make contracts as recommended. The railroads, as a rule, exacted full tariff rates for transporting troops, even though they were carrying theatrical companies of ten or more persons at reduced rates. In the latter part of July two brigades of General Brooke's division were ordered from Camp Chickamauga to Porto Rico; and Colonel J. G. C. Lee, General Brooke's chief quartermaster, was instructed to obtain rates to Newport News. He reported that the best rate obtainable was \$13 per

## RETURN OF THE SPANISH PRISONERS

man, and recommended that a contract be made with the Southern Railway. As I had been awaiting an opportunity to make an effort to break up this practice of charging single fare, first-class rates for transporting troops in full train-loads, I wired Colonel Lee, in the name of the Quartermaster-General, disapproving his recommendation and informing him that contracts would be made in Washington. I had ascertained previously that the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad would give us a rate of \$8 per man. I made the contract and wired Colonel Lee the rate and routeing. Within an hour or two a representative from the Southern Railway called on me and offered to meet the rate of \$8, which offer, of course, was declined. Colonel Lee resented this interference by an outsider, as he termed it, with his prerogatives, and later, when I was in Cuba, made it the subject of complaint before the commission investigating the conduct of the war with Spain. On my return to Washington, being called before the commission for a general investigation, I called attention to Colonel Lee's testimony, and stated the facts as related above. In so far as I could judge, my so-called interference met the approval of the commission. In this manner the "hold-up" of the Department by the Southern Railway was broken, and that road transported a following brigade at the \$8 rate. The route was shorter, and at even rates the road was entitled to the business.

## A SUPPRESSED MILITARY ORDER

AFTER the surrender of the Spanish troops at Santiago, Montauk Point, Long Island, was selected as the recuperating and convalescent camp for the Fifth Army Corps. General Shafter had reported much sickness in his command, principally malaria and typhoid fever, and there was grave danger of a yellow fever epidemic. The Department was called on to build, with all possible expedition, three separate camps, one for contagious cases, one for quarantine for suspected cases, and a general camp with hospital accommodations for 500 sick and total camp accommodations for 25,000 men. There was only one single-track railroad running from Long Island City to Montauk Point, a distance of about 120 miles. The order to establish the camp was issued on August 1, and on the 3d orders were issued for the embarkation of the Fifth Army Corps from Santiago. On the 10th I was ordered to Montauk Point personally to take charge of everything connected with transportation and to assist in every way possible in the preparation of the camp.

About 22,000 troops coming from Cuba would arrive by water; and 3000 coming from the South would arrive by the railroad. I found at Montauk Point an old, small steamboat-dock with about ten

## A SUPPRESSED MILITARY ORDER

feet only of water, and an iron pier, partly completed, intended to extend to deep water. I at once began the extension of the pier and chartered two double-deck excursion barges with tugs to lighter the troops from ships that might arrive before the completion of the pier. I gave special attention to increasing the side-tracks and the erection of quartermaster and commissary warehouses, the sinking of wells, and the erection of water-tanks.

On August 16 one of the New York papers published a telegram from Montauk Point to the effect that there was dissension in the Quartermaster's Department. The dispatch severely criticized me for assuming authority I did not have, and criticized the Secretary of War for having forced me on the Department. Newspaper articles of similar tenor had previously appeared, so that I was not seriously disturbed by this one. Indeed, I had become pretty well hardened by the lambasting the yellow press had given me during the previous two months. Happening to meet Major-General S. M. B. Young, commandant of the camp, I showed the article to him. He said that no such criticism had reached him, but that he had heard the question raised as to just what my position was. To this I replied that I was Chief of the Division of Transportation, and showed him my copy of the order of the Secretary of War, dated July 18, creating a Division of Transportation in the Quartermaster's Department, and detailing me as Chief of this Division and Colonel

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

Charles Bird as Deputy Chief. He read the order with some surprise, and then said no such order was in his files, nor had any of the several officers who had discussed with him the question of my position in the service knowledge of such an order.

I at once wired the Secretary for authority to return to Washington, and having received it, I took the first train. Next morning I examined the files which contain copies of all orders issued that appertain to the Quartermaster's Department, but failed to find the order of July 18. Thereupon I promptly sent in my resignation, as follows:

Washington, August 17, 1898.

General R. A. Alger,  
Secretary of War.

Sir:

I have the honor to tender my resignation as Colonel and Quartermaster U. S. Vols.

Earnestly requesting its early acceptance, I remain,  
Very respectfully,  
Your obedient servant,  
FRANK J. HECKER.

This communication was returned promptly with the following endorsement:

Respectfully returned disapproved. The services of Col. Hecker at this time are greatly needed by the Department, and I sincerely trust that he will withdraw it.

R. A. ALGER,  
Secretary of War.

## A SUPPRESSED MILITARY ORDER

I at once returned it with the following endorsement:

Respectfully returned to the Secretary of War, with the earnest request that he will withdraw his disapproval and accept my resignation.

FRANK J. HECKER,  
Col. & Q. M., U. S. Vols.

His private secretary then came to my room and said:

"The Secretary's compliments, and would I please to come down to his office?"

I instantly complied. On approaching his desk, he said:

"Hecker, what is all this about? You cannot be serious."

I informed him of the substance of the New York paper's article. He said he had read it, and was surprised that I should permit it to disturb me to the extent of insisting on the acceptance of my resignation. I then informed him of my conversation with General Young, and of my failure to find a copy of the order of July 18 in the files of the Quartermaster-General. The Secretary expressed great surprise, and asking me to sit down, passed into the room of Adjutant-General Corbin, adjoining. In about fifteen minutes he returned, very angry. He said that the Adjutant-General claimed he had not understood the order was intended to be promulgated to the Army in General Orders. The Secre-

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

tary expressed deep regret over the matter, begged me to withdraw my resignation, and said the order would be promulgated to the Army in any event, whether or not I remained in the service. I withdrew my resignation, and on the next day I received an official copy of the following order:

..

War Department,  
Adjutant-General's Office,  
Washington, August 18, 1898.  
General Orders  
No. 122

The following order of the War Department of July 18, 1898, is published for the information and guidance of all concerned:

“War Department, Washington, July 18, 1898.

“A Division of Transportation is hereby created in the Quartermaster-General’s Department, which shall be charged with the supervision and control of all rail and water transportation.

“Colonel Frank J. Hecker, U. S. Volunteers, is hereby detailed as Chief of this division, and Colonel Charles Bird, U. S. Volunteers, as Deputy Chief.

“Their reports upon the work of this division will be made direct to the Quartermaster-General.

“By order of the Secretary of War.

“H. C. CORBIN,  
“Adjutant-General.”

This episode clearly showed that the fears I expressed to the Secretary, the Quartermaster-Gen-

## A SUPPRESSED MILITARY ORDER

eral, and Major Bird on June 24, that the officers of the regular army would resent my entering the service as head of an important division, were well founded; but I am happy to say this was the last evidence of such resentment. During the remaining eight months of my service, I had the loyal support and co-operation of every officer connected with the service, in and out of the Quartermaster's Department.

## SERVICE IN CUBA

DURING the month of September I was instructed to visit Port Tampa, Miami, Fernandina, Brunswick, Savannah, Port Royal, and Charleston, make an inspection of the several ports, and recommend which one it was best, all things considered, to designate as the port of embarkation for the Army of Occupation of Cuba. I reported in favor of Savannah.

On October 4 I was appointed member of a board of officers to visit Cuba, under the following instructions:

To confer with Major-General Wade as to points to be garrisoned by the United States troops on the withdrawal of the Spanish forces. The board should carefully consider the strength of each garrison to be provided at the various points, and its conclusions should be reported to the Adjutant-General promptly for the information of the War Department. The places designated by General Wade will be visited by the board, that by personal observation they may be able to make complete recommendations, including provisions for shelter for men and supplies. They will set forth fully in each case the advisability of providing quarters or camps, particular attention being paid to the provision of suitable and ample hospital accommodations.

## SERVICE IN CUBA

The board will keep in view at all times and places the military requirements of the situation. The Secretary of War reposes confidence in the ability and experience of the members of the board to cover all the points necessary to a complete understanding of each case.

The following special instructions were also given to me:

War Department,  
Adjutant-General's Office,  
October 4, 1898.

Colonel F. J. Hecker,  
Chief of Transportation,  
Quartermaster's Department,  
Washington.

Sir:

In addition to your duties as member of the board —letter of this date, copy attached—the Secretary of War directs that you give your special attention to the question of dockage and all that relates to transports and transportation of and for our troops inland on the Island of Cuba; a report of which you will make to this office for the information of the Secretary of War.

Very respectfully,

H. C. CORBIN,  
Adjutant-General.

Some time in August the Secretary handed me a book of general information about Cuba, compiled by Mr. William J. Clark, an officer of the General Electric Company, who, as special representative of

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

that company, had spent several months in Cuba during the previous winter. Mr. Clark was a keen observer, and the book was full of reliable information. When I expressed a desire to meet the author, the Secretary called him to Washington, and on discussing with him my contemplated official trip to Cuba, he offered to accompany me as a volunteer, without compensation other than his expenses. This offer I quickly accepted. Mr. Sherman Gould, of Yonkers, N. Y., an eminent hydraulic engineer who had constructed the remarkable water-works of Havana ten years previously, also volunteered. On my request for a railway engineer, the Secretary asked Mr. Thomson, President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, to lend the Government one, and Captain U. I. Crawford, a division engineer of that road who had served in the Civil War, was selected by him. I recommended to the Secretary that he secure the services of Colonel George E. Waring, Jr., the eminent sanitary engineer of New York, if possible; and his valuable services were retained. This gave me a sort of volunteer staff of four first-rank men. Then the Secretary authorized me to employ Mr. Thomas S. Jerome, a leading young lawyer of Detroit, who had a fair knowledge of the Spanish language.

We left Washington October 5, and arrived in Havana on the 8th. After reporting to Major-General Wade, president of the Evacuation Commission, we spent a few days looking over Havana, the

## SERVICE IN CUBA

harbor, and the suburbs. The board of officers on garrisons and camp sites then convened and held regular sessions. Colonel Waring gave special attention to the general sanitary conditions, as did Captain Crawford to the railroad situation.

We found many Spanish troops quartered in warehouses located on the harbor, and a considerable number of the men were reported sick with yellow fever. The board of officers soon determined that it was out of the question to land any of our troops or stores in the harbor. A suitable camp site was found about four miles out of the city and near the sea. Contiguous to the site was a bight or small bay, known as Playa de Mariano, used by the Havana Yacht Club. A short wooden pier extended out about one hundred feet. Captain Crawford was instructed to make an examination and report on the practicability of extending this pier sufficiently to allow ships to lie alongside while discharging cargo.

Captain Crawford had made a cursory examination of the east side of Havana Bay, the side lying opposite to the city, and which was but sparsely occupied by fishing shanties and shacks. Back from the bay the country was rough and broken. He reported to me that he believed it practicable to build a short railroad to connect the piers at Casa Blanca (built out into the bay to deep water) with Guanaboca Station on the railroad running to Matanzas. Using this new railroad, we could connect with all the railroads running out of Havana, in the outskirts

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

of the city. I accompanied him over the ground, agreed with him, and instructed him to have a survey made. Captain Crawford having reported favorably on the extension of the pier at Playa de Mariano to deep water, and having estimated the approximate cost at \$10,000, the board of officers recommended that this be done. I wired the Secretary for instructions. On October 27 the Adjutant-General wired: "Secretary War authorizes work on temporary pier be put under way." This was done and a cargo of supplies for the construction of Camp Columbia was unloaded there in the latter part of November. We feared that the first severe Gulf storm might demolish the pier, but it was used until the following April and answered the purpose for which it was built.

Colonel Waring made exhaustive examination of the sanitary and hygienic conditions of Havana and the suburbs as far as Mariano, including the camp site selected. He met with our board frequently and advised with us respecting the sanitation of the camp. He prepared a skeleton of his proposed report and recommendations, which he read to us the night before he departed for New York. He and Messrs. Clark, Gould, and Jerome sailed on the morning of October 24. The second day out Colonel Waring was taken ill with yellow fever and died on the 29th, the day after reaching New York. His death was a dreadful shock. We were heart-broken. He had endeared himself to all of us by his

## SERVICE IN CUBA

great ability, indefatigable application, and earnestness. The last night we spent with him he was in high spirits and full of enthusiasm.

Owing largely to the unsettled and disturbed conditions arising out of the insurrection which, during the previous two or three years, had been running its course, culminating in the Spanish-American War, I found the railroads, tracks, and equipment in a run-down condition. There were five or six independent companies; each road was operated locally, with no system of through rates, billing, and ticketing; and there were no through trains. The contents of freight-cars were transferred at junction points, as also were passengers. One of the evils from which the railroads were suffering was a direct war tax on each ticket and pound of freight. These freight and passenger rates were exorbitant as compared with ours. Passenger rates, first class, were equal to ten cents per mile; second class, seven cents; and third class, in box-cars having benches, four cents. Freight rates were five, six, and even seven times those which prevailed in the United States for like commodities and distances.

I invited the railroad managers to meet in conference to take up the matter of the inland transportation of our troops. At our first meeting twelve or fifteen representatives were present, of whom two only spoke, or clearly understood, English. The delay and misunderstandings caused by translation were most exasperating. It required hours to reach

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

an understanding and agreement for through cars, billing, and ticketing. On the question of classification and rates three meetings were held without result. At the fourth meeting I submitted a zone tariff which, for both passengers and freight, was two and three times the rates prevailing in the United States. It was rejected. I then gave them the ultimatum that if the zone tariff as submitted was not accepted that day, I would recommend to the Secretary of War that he put it into effect as a military measure, and informed them I was sailing next morning at ten for New York. Late that afternoon a committee called on me and said that on further consideration they had decided to accept it, with the limitation of one year, and that when necessary the troops be carried in box-cars, because they had not enough passenger-cars to move large commands. This I agreed to.

The preliminary survey for a railroad from Casa Blanca, on the east side of Havana Bay, to a connection with the Matanzas line having showed that it was entirely practicable, a final location survey and estimate of cost of construction was made. The length of the railroad was fixed at five and one half miles, and its cost, including necessary side-tracks of two miles but excluding right of way, was estimated at \$125,000.

Having had orders previously to return to Washington early in November, I was greatly surprised on October 28 to receive the following cable:

## SERVICE IN CUBA

Secretary of War directs you return to this city and report in person to him.

H. C. CORBIN, Adjutant-General.

As the Secretary was kept advised of my daily conferences with the railroad managers and of the delay in reaching a conclusion, I was somewhat disturbed over the peremptory tone of this order. The cable was received a few hours before the sailing of the steamer for New York. Another steamer was due to sail November 1, and I felt confident of being able to bring negotiations with the railroad managers to a workable, if not satisfactory, conclusion before that date. On the one hand, to have left this important matter undetermined would be unwise; and on the other hand, it was a serious matter to disobey a peremptory order. However, at the risk of incurring the Secretary's censure, I replied to the order that I felt confident a satisfactory conclusion of the railroad transportation negotiation would be reached by November 1, and I would sail that day. On reaching Washington, the Secretary informed me that the President and he were much distressed over the death of Colonel Waring; that Messrs. Clark and Jerome reported the health conditions in Havana bad, and that I was exposing myself to infection. This made them very anxious about me, and the cable of the 28th was sent by the President's order to General Corbin.

Under orders to return to Washington for per-

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

sonal conference respecting the construction of the railroad and general conditions in and about Havana, I had sailed on November 1. I reached New York on the 5th, and Washington on the 6th. I spent the next four days in departmental work and had several conferences with the President and Secretary, at which the construction of the railroad; of a pier sixty feet wide and extending four hundred feet into the bay, so as to have twenty-five feet of water at low tide; and of quartermaster, commissary, and ordnance store-houses was approved. On November 10 the order to the Quartermaster-General to instruct me to enter into contracts for the execution of the work was issued, and I was ordered to return to Cuba; but as I had some business matters to attend to in Detroit, consent was given me to spend one day there. I left Washington on the evening of the 10th, arrived in Detroit the evening of the 11th, spent the 12th in Detroit, leaving there that night for Port Tampa, whence I sailed on the evening of the 14th and reached Havana on the morning of the 16th.

Before leaving Washington, I cabled Captain Crawford that construction of the railroad was authorized, and to prepare a detailed map, profiles, and specifications. These having been completed by the time I reached Havana, I cabled to three responsible contracting firms to send representatives to Havana to bid on the work; however, only two sent representatives and submitted bids. Their bids be-

## SERVICE IN CUBA

ing higher than the estimates made by Captain Crawford, I cabled the Secretary on November 29:

Owing to work being heavier—practically all rock—and bids higher than estimated, construction of pier and railroad will cost approximately one hundred seventy-five; or fifty thousand more than first estimate. This exclusive of store-houses or right of way. I await your instructions before making contract.

To this he replied on November 30:

You are authorized to build the wharf and railroad at the additional expense named by you in your cable of 29th.

I had also invited bids for two locomotives and twenty flat cars and seven large store-houses.

Pending the receipt of bids on the above work, I made a general observation trip to Cienfuegos, Santa Clara, Sagua la Grande, Cabarien, Cardenas, and Matanzas; leaving Havana on November 20 and returning on the 25th, having passed over substantially all the railroads and inspected all the harbors in the provinces of Havana, Matanzas, and Santa Clara.

## SUMMONED BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR WITH SPAIN

ON November 30 the commission appointed by the President to investigate the conduct of the war with Spain sent a summons for me to appear before it, and the Adjutant-General ordered me to come to Washington on the earliest day practicable, pursuant to which order I sailed from Havana on December 3 for Port Tampa. During the night of the 4th we encountered a violent Gulf storm, and for hours the steamer *Mascot* barely made steerage, delaying our arrival twenty-four hours, so that I did not reach Washington until the morning of the 7th. On my arrival at the hotel, I found a summons awaiting me, and at my office I found the following communication:

Washington, Dec. 6, 1898.

To the Adjutant General, U. S. A.,  
War Dep't, Washington.

Sir:

I am directed by the Commission to request you to direct the attendance of Colonel Frank J. Hecker,

SUMMONED BEFORE THE COMMISSION  
U. S. V., before the Commission *at once*, as they are  
now awaiting his testimony.

Very respectfully,

S. C. MILLS,  
Major, U. S. A., Recorder.

I reported to the Commission at 10 A.M., was under examination for three hours, and was recalled on the 9th and examined for another hour. My testimony covered thirty-eight printed pages.

Respecting the major matters on which I was examined, the finding of the Commission was as follows:

Finally, the Quartermaster's Department entered into contract with a New York firm to fit out an expedition with a large force of mechanics and laborers, with necessary materials, machinery, pile-drivers and implements for construction of docks and railways. The Quartermaster-General reports that this outfit proceeded to Santiago, Cuba, and thence to Ponce, Porto Rico, where its services were of much assistance to the Army.

The testimony shows that in the transportation of the Spanish prisoners from Santiago to Spain, the interests of the General Government received the most ample protection; that proposals were invited; that every effort was made to procure proper vessels, to provide for the care and comfort of the men; and that the cost of transportation by the Spanish Transatlantic Company was at the rate of \$55 for each officer and \$20 for each enlisted man. The first proposal of the Company was at the rate of \$60 and \$30 respectively, but they finally reduced their demands, so that the total price paid was over \$200,000 less than the original offer.

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

The contracts required that at the price named the Company should furnish subsistence and medical attendance and practically care for these prisoners from the time of their embarkation until landed in Spain. The total number of persons transported was 22,864, at a cost of \$513,860.

The purchase of transports by the department showed an equal effort to guard the interests of the General Government, and the testimony is to the effect that the purchase of these vessels was made direct, either with the owners or their agents; that the prices were reasonable, and neither fees nor allowances were granted by the Government officials or paid by the Government to so-called middlemen.

There had been much criticism of me by the yellow press; Colonel J. G. C. Lee, U. S. A., the Chief Quartermaster at Camp Chickamauga, had, in his testimony before the Commission, severely resented what he termed "interference by an outsider"; there was delay in my appearing before the Commission, and my opinion was and is that these factors combined had created a prejudice against me in the minds of several of the members. Captain Evan P. Howell, of Georgia, one of the members, asked me, in what seemed a sneering tone, "What influence did you use with the President to secure your appointment?", and, on my hesitating in replying because of the implied insult, asked to withdraw the question. I insisted on answering it, and told briefly the circumstances under which I had entered the service. Whereupon he very politely said that the question

SUMMONED BEFORE THE COMMISSION  
was an improper one and should not have been asked, and he requested my consent to have the question and my reply stricken out.

That evening he called at my hotel and apologized handsomely, saying that what I have above stated influenced him in asking the question; that they had been hunting for the "nigger in the wood-pile" for several months, and he had the feeling that when I appeared before the Commission they would find him.

On December 7, the day of my arrival in Washington from Cuba, a cable was received by the Quartermaster-General, informing him of the death of Lieutenant-Colonel C. W. Williams, depot quartermaster at Havana. I had seen much of Colonel Williams during the previous two months. He was a graduate of West Point, a man of splendid attainments and high character, with a most promising future career; and his sudden death from yellow fever was as great a shock as was that of Colonel Waring ten days previous. In addition to these sudden deaths, the death of the chief clerk and of another clerk in the depot quartermaster's office, and of Captain Bisbee, of General Wade's staff, making five deaths in all from this dread disease within a period of six weeks, out of our small army colony temporarily resident in Cuba, were distressing and disturbed the service seriously. Every one felt sad and depressed.

## RESIGNATION

BETWEEN December 7 and 15 I placed contracts for the construction of the railroad, pier, store-houses, locomotives, and cars. On the latter date, I said to the Secretary that, with these contracts made and satisfactory transportation agreements concluded with the Cuban railroads, there seemed no necessity for my continuance in the service, and that I desired to send in my resignation, effective January 1, and would like leave to go to Detroit to attend the marriage of my daughter Louise and spend the Christmas holidays with my family. To this he replied that the President and he desired me to continue in the service another year, that the President had expressed his intention to talk with me about it, and that he would endeavor to arrange for a conference that evening.

We called at the White House by appointment; the President, greeting me most cordially, complimented me on the result of my examination by the investigating commission; said he much desired me to remain in the service during the coming year, and, to my great surprise, tendered me the appointment of Governor of the Matanzas Province in

## RESIGNATION

Cuba. Thanking him for the honor done me and expressing my high appreciation thereof, I said there were many officers in the Army who were as competent as I was, and more so, to fill the office, and that they were entitled to preferential consideration. I added that important changes in my business and associates would soon occur, and I felt I ought to return to Detroit, and therefore I was constrained to ask him to permit me to decline. He spoke most kindly of my service, and said that under the circumstances he could not do otherwise than accede to my request, but that he hoped I would consent to remain in the Department until the contracts just entered into were executed and transportation matters in Cuba were in smooth running operation. He suggested April 1 as the date of my retirement. In the meantime he said the Secretary would undoubtedly consent to my spending as much time in Detroit as I might deem necessary. To this I consented. The date of acceptance of my resignation was subsequently changed so that it took effect May 1. Upon leaving, he wished me an enjoyable holiday season with my family, and placing his hand on my shoulder, said: "Colonel, I have in mind in the near future a civil appointment which I think you will accept."

In December, 1902, a Washington telegram appeared in the Detroit "Evening Journal," to the effect that it was rumored my name was under consideration by President Roosevelt for appointment

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

as a member of the Isthmian Canal Commission. As I had never even thought of applying for that or any other Government appointment, I considered the rumor groundless; but feeling interested to know how it originated, I wrote Otto Carmichael, the Washington correspondent of the "Journal," whom I knew well, for the source of the rumor. He replied that among the late President McKinley's Panama Canal papers there was a memorandum containing my name for consideration as a member of the Commission; and subsequently General Alger, who was then in the United States Senate, confirmed this.

In February, 1904, I received the following communication:

White House, Washington,  
February 24, 1904.

My dear Mr. Hecker:

It is my purpose to appoint you on the Panama Canal Commission—a Commission which I intend to compose only of the ablest and best men available for the purpose in this country.<sup>1</sup> I trust you can accept.

Sincerely yours,

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Col. Frank J. Hecker.

I left Washington on December 16 for Detroit, where I remained until January 1, 1899. In all I

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Hecker served as a member of the first Panama Canal Commission from March, 1904, until his resignation on November 16, 1904.

## RESIGNATION

had spent only seven days in Detroit between the date of Secretary Alger's telegram, June 18, calling me to Washington, and December 17.

On my return to Washington, the Quartermaster-General informed me that it was the Secretary's wish that I should thereafter devote all my time and attention to matters connected with the varied service in Cuba. I spent about a week cleaning up, in Washington and New York, and left on the 10th for Havana, arriving there on the 13th. I spent the time until January 23 principally in getting the construction of the railroad, pier, and store-house under way and expedited.

I received orders on January 23 from Major-General Brooke, who had been appointed Military Governor of Cuba, to proceed to the Isle of Pines, examine into and report on the feasibility of establishing a convalescent camp there, and secure such information as was obtainable respecting a favorable site. After spending four days there I reported adversely, being influenced largely by the fact that the channel for three or four miles approaching the island was so shallow that not to exceed four feet depth of water could be depended on, and only extreme exigency would justify the expenditure of the large sum of money necessary to improve the channel and to build the ships necessary to carry any considerable number of men there.

Returning to Havana on the 27th, I gave attention to numerous matters connected with construc-

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

tion and transportation until February 7, when I received an order to proceed to Washington. I found the Secretary was much disturbed over the slow progress of the construction work, and I had some difficulty in satisfying him that everything possible was being done to expedite it.

A day or two after my arrival, while spending an evening with the Secretary and talking about general conditions in Cuba, I happened to refer to the splendid work Lieutenant-Colonel Tasker H. Bliss, the Collector of Customs of the Port of Havana, was doing, and the difficulties under which it was being performed. I had served with Colonel Bliss for two months on the board of officers appointed October 4 to select and prepare camp sites for the Army of Occupation, and had then learned to esteem him highly for his ability and his many excellent qualities. I told the Secretary it was unfair on the part of the Government to appoint officers to such important positions on the wholly inadequate army pay they received, and mentioned a conversation I had had with Colonel Bliss the day before I sailed. We often breakfasted together at our hotel at eleven o'clock (breakfast in Havana being really an early luncheon), and on that morning he came into the dining-room, all in perspiration. On asking him what the matter was, he replied that he was hot walking up from the Custom-house. I asked him why in the world he walked; to which he replied that it was because he could not afford to keep

## RESIGNATION

a cab and the Government did not furnish one, and rather than ride in the filthy mule-cars he walked. He further explained that he had no income other than his army pay, of which he sent half to Mrs. Bliss for her and their daughters' living expenses. I referred also to General Brooke's very economical establishment, and said criticisms unfavorable to our Government were common among the Cubans when comparing the social entertainments given by General Brooke with those given by his Spanish predecessor, General Blanco; and that General Ludlow, Governor of Havana Province, whose wife fortunately had an independent income, entertained more handsomely than General Brooke did.

The next day I received a telephone message saying the President desired me to come to the White House. On arriving there, I was shown into the Cabinet room, and finding the members of the Cabinet sitting around the table, hesitated about entering, when the President, pointing to a vacant chair placed near him, said: "Come in, Colonel, and sit down. We are conferring about a conversation you had with the Secretary of War yesterday, in which you criticized the Government's treatment of General Brooke, General Ludlow, and Lieutenant-Colonel Bliss. Will you please say to us what you said to the Secretary." I was a good deal embarrassed, but repeated substantially what I had said, and replied to questions asked by the President and some of the members, and for fifteen minutes lis-

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

tended to a discussion of my so-called criticism. The sequel was most interesting. Later that afternoon I received a copy of the following executive order:

*Whereas*, Major-General John R. Brooke, Major-General William Ludlow, and Lieutenant-Colonel Tasker H. Bliss are respectively performing, in addition to their ordinary military duties, civil functions in connection with the administration of the Government of Cuba, which requires outlays and expenses to maintain the proper dignity of their respective positions in excess of the amount of salary which they receive as officers of the United States Army:

*Ordered*, That for his services as Military Governor of the Island of Cuba, Major-General John R. Brooke shall receive an annual salary out of the revenues of the island at the rate of \$7500 a year; that Major-General William Ludlow shall receive out of the revenues of the island an annual salary at the rate of \$5000; that Lieutenant-Colonel Tasker H. Bliss, as Collector of the Port of Havana, shall receive out of the customs revenues at Havana an annual salary at the rate of \$3500; these to be in addition to their regular salary as United States officers, the allowances to begin March 1, 1899, and to be paid monthly, and evidenced by duly executed vouchers.

Except for a visit to Detroit of five days to attend to some private business affairs, I spent the time from February 10 to March 2 in Washington and New York. The latter date I left Washington, as I supposed on my last trip to Cuba, on the under-

## RESIGNATION

standing arrived at in December that my resignation was to take effect April 1.

I arrived in Havana on March 6, and was much disappointed over the progress made in the construction works. There had been unusually heavy rains, and delays in receipt of material. The railroad and pier were sufficiently completed by March 15 to begin operating, but the store-houses were not ready for occupancy until April 1. I closed up substantially all matters that had been under my charge on March 18, and sailed for Port Tampa on the 19th, arriving in Washington on the morning of the 22d.

On March 15 I had cabled the substantial completion of the railroad and pier to the Secretary, and had asked for consent to sail on the 19th to enable me to attend an important business meeting in New York on the 23d. In his reply, giving the consent asked for, he informed me of his proposed visit to Cuba before the end of March, and said that he wanted me to accompany him across the island.

The business meeting in New York on the 23d was in connection with the taking over by the American Car and Foundry Company, recently formed, of the Michigan-Peninsular Car Company, of which I was President, and it was important that I should attend. I cabled the Secretary to this effect.

Immediately after my arrival in Washington I called on the Secretary, when it was agreed that I should return to Havana after the New York meet-

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

ing. I found that, barring delays en route, I could reach Havana the day before the Secretary's arrival there. I arrived in that city at midnight, March 27, and he arrived at noon on the 28th.

I accompanied him on his trip from Havana to Cienfuegos on the 29th and 30th. He sailed from the latter place for Porto Rico, but as it was important that I should be in New York on April 6, and in Detroit the following week, I left the Secretary at Cienfuegos, returned to Havana, and sailed for New York on April 1.

This ended my active service in the army during the Spanish-American War. No officer ever had kindlier or more considerate treatment than the President and the Secretary of War accorded me. The service was interesting. While in its earlier months it tried my temper at times almost to the breaking-point, I was later repaid for having put a curb-bit on my temper, by the loyal support, co-operation, and friendship of all the officers with whom my duties brought me in contact. I was greatly blessed with fair health during the entire ten months of service. For this I am in part indebted to the faithful services of William Pannell, a colored messenger in the War Department, who volunteered to accompany me to Cuba as my messenger and body-servant, and who remained loyal and faithful during the panicky weeks when the fell disease, yellow fever, took such a dreadful toll from our small colony.

## RESIGNATION

I close this narrative by transcribing two letters that mean more to me than any reader of them can realize:

Executive Mansion,  
Washington,  
April 10, 1899.

Dear Colonel Hecker:

The Secretary of War has advised me of your resignation. I cannot ask you to remain, in view of your large private interests requiring your attention, but I cannot permit you to go out of the service without thanking you most heartily for the splendid work you gave the country during the Spanish War.

With sincere appreciation,  
Your friend,

WILLIAM McKINLEY.

War Department,  
Office of the Secretary,  
Washington, D. C.,  
May 1, 1899.

Dear Colonel Hecker:

To-day, at your request, you retire from the Volunteer service of the Army.

You entered it at the earnest request of the President and myself, and with much reluctance on your part.

How well you have performed the great task of conducting the Transportation Bureau, to which you were assigned as chief, the records will show—a record that you and your children can always be justly proud of.

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

We part with you officially with great regret. You are entitled to the thanks of the Country for your services.

Wishing you every happiness, I am,  
Sincerely yours,

R. A. ALGER,  
Secretary of War.

Col. Frank J. Hecker,  
Q. M. D., U. S. Vols.









*26  
20*

*10/10*

**NEDWICK'S BOOK STORE**  
171 NO. MICHIGAN AVE.  
CHICAGO 1, ILL.  
"OUT-OF-PRINT BOOKS"

